

INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION (IRELAND) COMMISSION.

FINAL REPORT

OF

THE COMMISSIONERS.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.



DUBLIN:

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WARRANT APPOINTING THE COMMISSION.

CHIEF SECRETARY'S OFFICE,
DUBLIN CASTLE

BY THE LORD LIEUTENANT-GENERAL AND GENERAL GOVERNOR OF IRELAND.

CADOGAN.

WHEREAS it appears to Us expedient to cause an Inquiry to be made into the subject of the system of Intermediate Education under the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, 1878 :

Now We, GEORGE HENRY, EARL CADOGAN, Lord Lieutenant-General and General Governor of Ireland, do hereby nominate and appoint the Members of the Intermediate Education Board, that is to say :—

THE RIGHT HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER PALLS, LL.D., Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer in Ireland (Chairman),

THE RIGHT HONORABLE MR. JUSTICE MADDEN, LL.D. (Vice-Chairman),

THE REVEREND GEORGE SALMON, D.D., D.C.L., Provost of Trinity College,

THE RIGHT HONORABLE O'COUGH DOX, LL.M., LL.B.,

THE REVEREND W. TODD MARTIN, D.D.,

DAVID G. BARKLEY, Esq., LL.D., and

HIS GRACE THE MOST REVEREND WILLIAM J. WALSH, D.D., Archbishop of Dublin,

to be Our Commissioners for the purpose aforesaid, that is to say to inquire into and report upon the system of Intermediate Education in Ireland, as established by the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, 1878, and into its practical working. Also as to whether any reforms or alterations of the present system are desirable, and, if so, whether further legislation is necessary for carrying them into effect.

And for the better effecting the purposes of this Our Commission We do by these presents authorize and empower you the aforesaid Commissioners, or any three or more of you to be named by you, to call before you or any three or more of you such persons as you may think fit to examine, and by whom you may be the better informed in the matter hereby submitted for your consideration and everything connected therewith, and generally to inquire of and concerning the premises by all other lawful ways and means whatsoever.

And also to call for and examine such books, documents, papers, writings, or records, as you or any three or more of you as aforesaid shall think useful for the purposes of the inquiry.

And We also by these presents authorize and empower you, or any three or more of you as aforesaid to visit and personally inspect such places as you or any three or more of you may deem expedient for the purposes aforesaid, and Our pleasure is that you or any three or more of you as aforesaid do from time to time and with all convenient speed report to Us what you shall find concerning the premises.

And We further by these presents ordain that this Our Commission shall continue in full force and virtue, and that you Our Commissioners do from time to time proceed in the execution thereof although the same be not continued from time to time by adjournment.

Given at Her Majesty's Castle of Dublin, this 30th day of May, 1898.

By His Excellency's Command,

J. B. DOUGHERTY.

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FINAL REPORT.

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INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION (IRELAND) COMMISSION.

FINAL REPORT.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY GEORGE HENRY, EARL CADOGAN, K.G.,

&c., &c., &c.,

LORD LIEUTENANT-GENERAL AND GENERAL GOVERNOR OF IRELAND.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCE,

We, the Commissioners appointed "to inquire into and report upon the system of Intermediate Education in Ireland, as established by the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, 1878, and into its practical working; also as to whether any reforms or alterations of the present system are desirable, and, if so, whether further legislation is necessary for carrying them into effect," beg to submit to your Excellency our Second and Final Report on the subject of our inquiry.

INTRODUCTION.

In submitting our recommendations to your Excellency, and reporting the evidence upon which they are founded, we desire to advert to the circumstances which led to the inquiry in which we have been engaged, in order to make clear the scope and character of our Report.

The Board of Intermediate Education in Ireland was established by a statute passed in the year 1878, which enacted that "it shall be the duty of the Board to promote intermediate secular education in Ireland in the manner provided by this Act." For the purpose of carrying this Act into effect, the sum of one million pounds, portion of the Irish Church Surplus, was placed at the disposal of the Board, which was directed to apply the annual income for the purposes of the Act, and to invest any surplus that might be in hands from year to year in the purchase of Government securities. The purposes of this Act are twofold, and are thus defined:—

(1) "Providing for the payment of prizes and exhibitions, and the giving of certificates to students;" and

(2) "Providing for the payment, to managers of schools complying with the prescribed conditions, of fees dependent on the results of public examinations of students."

The income of the Board from this source was originally £32,500, but in consequence of the reduction of the rate of interest it has now fallen to £27,500.

In 1890, a further endowment was provided by the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Act of that year. This Act provided that the Irish share of the Customs and Excise duties paid in any year to the Local Taxation (Ireland) Account, should be applied (a) as to the sum of seventy-eight thousand pounds, for the purpose of primary education, and (b) as to the residue, in the promotion of Intermediate education. The Board is directed by this statute to apply the moneys so paid to it for both or either of the purposes following, but for no other purposes, namely:—

"(1) For the payment to managers of schools, complying with the conditions prescribed under the said Act [of 1878], of fees dependent on the results of public examinations of students; and

"(2) For the payment of prizes and exhibitions, and the giving of certificates to students;"

"according to a scheme to be settled by the said Board, with the approval of the Lord Lieutenant and the Treasury."

The amount at the disposal of the Board under the Act of 1890 varies from year to year. For the year 1896 it was £54,174 19s. 8d.; and the average for the last five years was £47,445 18s. 11d.

The total income of the Board for 1896 was £86,190 0s. 3d.; and the average total income for the last five years, £82,616 18s. 5d.

Intermediate
Education
(Ireland)
Act, 1878.

Local
Taxation
(Customs
and Excise)
Act, 1890.

Thus it appears that the Board has no power to promote Intermediate education in Ireland, save in the manner laid down by the legislature, by administering the particular system prescribed by it. The Board has not the powers possessed by other educational Boards and departments, of administering public funds in accordance with the provision of statutes, subject to the control of the legislature.

The
"Scheduled
Rules."

The statutory system by which the Board is controlled under the Act of 1878 was still further developed in the Schedule to that Act. The Schedule contained certain rules which the Board was directed to carry into effect, and by which its proceedings were to be, in the first instance, governed. New rules might be made by the Board, which were to be of no effect if disapproved by either House of Parliament. It is obvious that rules made under this power are valid only so far as they are in accordance with the general principles laid down by the Act, and that these principles remain binding upon the Board until modified by the legislature. It is also to be observed that the Board was bound to accept the general principles upon which the Scheduled Rules were based, as expressing the view of the legislature, and embodying the policy sanctioned by it in 1878, and then imposed by it upon the Board. Accordingly, while the Board has from time to time laid before Parliament rules modifying the Scheduled Rules in matters of detail, it has not hitherto felt itself at liberty to suggest to the legislature a departure from the general principles of the system which it was appointed to administer.

The Scheduled Rules prescribe:—

(a.) That the payments to be made to managers of schools as the result of the public examination of students shall be made in respect of each individual student who passes, the payments varying in amount according to a defined scale.

(b.) That prizes and exhibitions shall be awarded to the students highest in order of merit in the general examination list for the whole country in each year, without reference to the order of merit in the examination list for any particular place of examination.

Fairness of
the existing
system.

Thus the system which the Board was called into existence to administer may be shortly described as one of payments of results fees to managers calculated on the passes of individual students, and of rewards to students based on a general competitive examination held annually for the whole of Ireland. This examination is held at a great number of centres throughout Ireland, and must, for practical reasons, be conducted by means of written papers only.

Results of
the legisla-
ture.

The principle of payment by results had, at the time, the approval of high educational authorities, and was that by which elementary education was then mainly regulated throughout the United Kingdom. Its introduction into the system of secondary education in Ireland undoubtedly applied a much-needed stimulus. We note with satisfaction the testimony borne, even by those who advocate radical changes in the system, to the beneficial results which followed from the legislation of 1878. Not only did this legislation supply an endowment which was badly needed, but it raised the general standard of education, introduced a better programme into the schools of a lower class, stimulated both masters and pupils to increased exertion, and afforded a direct inducement to teachers to devote attention to the instruction of the ordinary pass students, instead of concentrating their efforts upon the more promising pupils.

Recent
educational
movements.

It was not to be expected that a system which was welcomed as satisfactory twenty years ago should continue to be so regarded throughout all time. During the years that have passed since 1878 the subject of secondary education has occupied a much larger share of public attention at home and abroad than it had previously engaged.

In Germany, for example, much has been done to improve the methods of secondary education by developing the system of *Realschulen*, and extending it so as to meet modern needs. In France, too, considerable attention has been paid to educational problems. A Commission on secondary education has been sitting, and widespread discussion has taken place in that country on the subject of this department of education. In the United States of America there has been similar activity, and the methods in use in secondary schools have recently been the subject of special inquiries. Within the United Kingdom there have been similar movements of importance. In 1884 a Royal Commission was appointed to consider "the best methods of establishing a well-organized system of Secondary Education in England." The Report of this Commission, which was presented in 1895, deals exhaustively with the entire subject. We have derived much assistance from this Report, and from the great body of evidence collected by the Commission. Secondary education in Wales formed the subject of a Departmental Committee of inquiry in 1880, and an Act framed on the lines of the recommendations of this Committee

was passed in 1859, under which secondary education has been organised in Wales and Monmouthshire. In Scotland, also, important steps have been taken. In 1886 a system of higher inspection, extending over all higher class schools in Scotland, was established under the Scotch Education Department; and in connection with this a system of "leaving-certificate" examinations was instituted.

The members of the Irish Intermediate Education Board had thus brought under their notice various ideas and suggestions which were not in the contemplation of the framers of the Act of 1878. Their experience of the practical working of the system made them aware of defects which they would gladly see removed. The Act of 1890 increased the resources of the Board and added to its responsibility, but did not enlarge its powers, while the system was subjected to a severer test, with the result that its evils were intensified and its defects and shortcomings were brought prominently into notice.

The Board, as the result of its experience of the working of the Act, especially in recent years, came to the conclusion that the time had arrived at which the system established in 1878 should be subjected to a thorough and public examination, not only as to its practical working, but also as to the principles upon which it was based. The Board had no power to apply any portion of the funds under its control in the conduct of such an inquiry, which, to be of any value, must necessarily be of an exhaustive character. The Board, therefore, in the month of January, 1895, by a unanimous resolution, represented to your Excellency that there were many grave defects in the system, with the more serious of which it was powerless to deal under the existing statutes, and requested your Excellency to obtain for it the necessary powers and funds, by constituting the members of the Board, with such other persons, if any, as your Excellency might think fit, a Commission to inquire into the system and into its practical working. Your Excellency was pleased to comply with this request by issuing to the Members of the Board the Commission under which we present this Report.

In the first part of our Report we state the procedure which we adopted for the purpose of obtaining information, and the general nature of the evidence which we have obtained. In the second we deal with the important question of the best practical mode of testing the efficiency of schools, for the purpose of distributing the school grant, and we consider the positions which examination and inspection should hold in the Intermediate system. In the third we explain the character of the public general examination as we consider it ought to be conducted. In the fourth we suggest an improved mode of distributing the school grant without abandoning the basis of such an examination. The fifth deals with the division of the Intermediate programme into several distinct courses. The sixth is conversant with the education of girls; the seventh with the several grades into which Intermediate students are divided, and the eighth with the mode of ascertaining the "Intermediate School Roll" upon which the school grant should be paid. In the ninth we deal with the honour examination and with the distribution of exhibitions and prizes. In the tenth the charge of over-pressure brought against the Intermediate system is considered. The eleventh contains suggestions as to the granting of special aid to certain schools. In the twelfth certain suggestions are contained as to the teaching of Science and Art. In the thirteenth the necessity for additional legislation is dealt with. The fourteenth contains a reference to various matters upon which evidence has been given, but which we have not made the subject of specific recommendations in our Report, and the fifteenth contains a general summary of our recommendations.

Appointment of the Commission at the request of the Board.

Arrangement of Report.

I.—PROCEDURE.

It may be convenient here to state briefly the procedure which we adopted for the purpose of obtaining information.

The first step taken by us, as stated in our former Report to your Excellency, was the issue of a circular with a schedule of queries. It seemed to us that the best way of ascertaining the views and criticisms of those conversant with the system of Irish Intermediate education was to give to persons engaged in the working of the system, or interested in it, an opportunity of stating in writing their views as to the practical working of the system, and their suggestions as to reforms and alterations. A circular and schedule of queries were accordingly prepared, inviting observations upon all the provisions of the Act of Parliament by which the system was founded, and upon the Rules of the Intermediate Education Board and its Programme of Examinations. In addition, a place was provided in the schedule for suggestions not falling under any of those heads.

Written evidence.

The circulars and schedules were sent to 958 persons, including the following classes:—(1) the managers of all the schools who in 1897 sent in school rolls to the offices of the Intermediate Education Board; (2) the examiners under the Board; (3) the Archbishops and Bishops of Sees in Ireland and the Moderator of the General Assembly; (4) the members of Parliament for Irish constituencies and the heads of municipal bodies. They were also sent to several of the Fellows of Trinity College, Dublin; of the Professors and Members of the Council of the University of Dublin; of the Senators and Fellows of the Royal University of Ireland; of the Presidents, Vice-Presidents, and the Professors of all the most important colleges in Ireland; to members of certain educational boards and commissions; to several teachers and associations of teachers, and to other persons connected with, or interested in, education in Ireland.

We further gave public notice of our desire to receive and consider the views and suggestions of any persons having experience of Intermediate education or taking an interest in it, who wished to give us information. Seventy-one persons availed themselves of this invitation and received schedules. Some few schedules were sent out at a later period, which brought the total number of schedules issued to 1,031.

In the circular accompanying the schedules we requested that the replies to the queries should be sent in to us not later than August 31, 1898. At the request of several heads of important Intermediate schools, the time for sending in the replies was extended to October 31, 1898. Before that date we received 301 schedules of answers.

These answers, together with the circulars, schedule of queries, and other documents relating thereto, have already been presented to your Excellency in the Appendix to our former Report. Twenty-five schedules of answers did not reach us in sufficient time to be included in that volume. They are, however, printed in the Appendix to this Report.

The 326 schedules of answers received by us contain the opinions of upwards of 360 persons,—many schedules bearing signatures of more than one person,—of whom 350 were persons actually engaged in the work of Intermediate Education, including 160 head masters, head mistresses, or managers of Intermediate schools. In addition to these we were favoured with the views and suggestions of twelve Fellows and Professors of Trinity College, Dublin, or Members of the Council of the University of Dublin, and of fourteen Fellows of the Royal University of Ireland. The answers also include those of a large number of examiners under the Board and of many Professors of the more important colleges in Ireland.

Oral evidence.

Having thus obtained a large and representative body of evidence, we opened our public sittings for the examination of witnesses in January last. In order to secure representative witnesses we addressed a communication to the managers of the leading Intermediate schools, stating that we should be glad to have an opportunity of receiving the evidence of witnesses selected by them, in the event of their being desirous of having their views put forward *sive voce* as well as through the written statements which they had already sent to us in answer to our queries. A similar communication was sent to the associations of managers and head masters of Intermediate schools, and to several organizations of teachers actually engaged in the work of Intermediate education. Many of the schools and bodies so addressed sent forward witnesses to represent their views before us. We also invited several other persons to give oral evidence who, from their special knowledge or from their experience, were particularly qualified to give us valuable information.

We devoted twenty-five sittings to the reception of oral evidence, and we examined in all sixty-four witnesses. Of these, twenty-six were managers, head masters, or other representatives of Intermediate schools. Nine others were teachers or representatives of teachers' organizations, and four were Presidents of colleges. We also examined representatives of the following bodies:—The Royal Dublin Society, the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, the Royal Colleges of Surgeons and Physicians, and the Gaelic League. Among the remaining witnesses are included several Fellows and Professors of Trinity College, Dublin, some Senators and Fellows of the Royal University of Ireland, and other important witnesses. The evidence of all these witnesses is contained in Part I. of the Appendix to this Report.

English and Scotch expert opinion.

In addition to the written answers to queries and to the oral evidence referred to, we have had before us a considerable body of documentary evidence in the shape of memoranda, letters, and returns. At an early period in the progress of our inquiry we considered it advisable to procure assistance from those who were conversant with the educational systems in operation in England and Scotland. To this end we applied to the Education Department of England and Wales and to the Scotch Education Depart-

ment, and we forwarded to them a statement of questions with a request that we might be favoured with the opinion of such of their officials as they might deem most competent to advise us on the matters referred to in the questions. Through the courtesy of these departments we were enabled to have the assistance of some of their most experienced officials, namely—Mr. M. E. Sadler, Director of Special Inquiries and Reports to the Committee of Council on Education; Mr. W. Scott Coward, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Training Colleges in England; and Sir Henry Craik, Secretary to the Scotch Education Department. We also asked the assistance of the Science and Art Department, of the Schools Examination Delegacy of the University of Oxford, of the Schools Examination Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, and of the College of Preceptors, London. Each of these bodies was kind enough to forward replies. We invited also the opinion of Sir Joshua Fitch, formerly one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Training Colleges in England, and we have been favoured with his opinion on many of the questions submitted. The statement of questions submitted for the opinion of English and Scotch educational experts, together with the replies received, will be found in Part II. of the Appendix to this Report.

Other documentary evidence was submitted to us from time to time. Many witnesses put in documents and memoranda in connection with their evidence, and we also received from persons who were not summoned as witnesses many written communications, offering suggestions for our consideration. Finally, we caused to be prepared various returns bearing on certain matters connected with our inquiry. All these documents have received our careful consideration; and the more important of them have been printed, and are contained in the Appendix.

We were desirous to obtain, if possible, an expression of opinion from another class of witnesses—parents of students, and persons who had themselves been educated under the Intermediate system. It was not, of course, possible for the Commission to make a selection of persons belonging to these classes who would be willing to come forward, and whose evidence would be of value. The only means of calling their attention to the inquiry was that already mentioned; that is to say, the publication of advertisements in numerous newspapers, as well provincial as metropolitan, giving notice of our desire to receive and consider the views and suggestions of any persons having experience in Intermediate education, or taking an interest in it, who desired to give information to us. Only twenty-one persons availed themselves of this invitation; and of these scarcely any expressed their views as representatives of parents or of former students under the system. It would not be legitimate to conclude from this that the classes of the public to which we have referred are satisfied with the working of the present system. But it may be fairly inferred that they are content to leave the task of its reformation and development to the Commission, aided by the evidence of those more immediately connected with educational work.

Our Report is based on a careful consideration of the evidence, written and oral, with which we have been furnished. We have not found it possible to adopt all the suggestions offered to us by those whose authority in educational matters we fully recognise. For opinions differed widely (as was to be expected) with regard to many of the subjects of our inquiry. But we venture to hope that, by a process of selection and combination, we have been able to construct a system which, if carried into effect, will preserve those features of the present system by which the confidence of the public has been gained, and at the same time render the work of the Board more effective in the promotion of Intermediate education in Ireland.

To have incorporated in our Report references to the mass of evidence laid before us would have had the result of overloading it with matters of detail. We have considered it more convenient to afford to those interested in the subject the means of ascertaining the views of the several witnesses, by the preparation of digests of their evidence, and by the insertion, in the Appendix to this Report, of copious Indexes, by reference to which the views of the several witnesses upon each of the subjects under consideration may be readily ascertained.

Although our Report deals mainly with reforms and alterations in matters of principle, the evidence printed in our Appendices is conversant with a variety of details which we have not made the subject of special recommendations. The inquiry in which we have been engaged afforded us a valuable opportunity of ascertaining the views of experts on a variety of subjects which had for many years engaged the attention of the Board. The information and advice thus obtained will be of great advantage to the Board in its future administration of the system. But as the matters to which they relate can be dealt with by rules of the Board, and do not affect any of the principles laid down in the Act or in the Scheduled Rules of 1873, they are not made the subject of specific recommendations in this Report.

Invitation
to other
witnesses.

Evidence,
how dealt
with.

II.—EXAMINATION AND INSPECTION

The test or
the effi-
ciency of
schools.

By far the most important of the inquiries which engaged our attention was the consideration of the best practical test of the relative efficiency of schools, for the purpose of determining the proportions in which they should participate in the funds at the disposal of the Board.

It seemed to be generally accepted that while a portion of these moneys should be employed in the direct encouragement of students by the institution of some system of exhibitions and prizes, the larger portion should be applied in promoting the efficiency of the schools, and should be distributed among the managers, in proportion to the educational work done. We propose to deal, in the first instance, with the latter branch of the subject.

Suggestions
by wit-
nesses.

It has been suggested by some witnesses that the test of comparative efficiency established by the Act—a public examination of students by an authority external to the schools—should be abandoned, and that the proportions payable to the managers of the various schools should be determined only by the result of periodical inspection, conducted by officers of the Board, of the work done at the several schools. It was suggested by others that a portion of the funds at the disposal of the Board should be distributed as the direct result of a public general examination, and another portion as the direct result of inspection. A third suggestion was that the shares of the schools should be determined in the first instance by the result of the examination, but that the rate of payment might be increased or diminished in accordance with the result of inspection. Others, again, were opposed to inspection being taken into account at all, except as a corrective of the defects incidental to a system of written examination.

Inspection.

These suggestions led to a consideration of the place which inspection should occupy in our Intermediate system, and to a comparison between inspection and examination as the basis of the distribution of the school grant.

Although the Act of 1878 recognises inspection of schools as being within the province of the Board, inspection formed no part of the system embodied in the Scheduled Rules. Its importance, at least in secondary education, was not at that time so fully recognised as it has since come to be. The greater value now attached to it is partly due to its merits, and partly (as pointed out by Sir Joshua Fitch in a memorandum furnished to the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, England) to a reaction against a particular method of payment by individual results, which, however, is not a necessary part of a system of general examination. "It is not surprising," he says, "that teachers who had learned to associate the practice of individual examination with a wrong method of computing the grant were led to view individual examination itself as a grievance, and to prefer the method of class and sample examination and general inspection."

Five once
examina-
tion.

One of the undoubtedly advantages of inspection is that it renders it possible to apply *viva voce* examination in testing school-work. We have already pointed out that a public general examination held for the whole of Ireland in several hundred centres must, for practical reasons, be conducted by written papers only. But there are certain branches, the efficient teaching of which cannot be adequately tested in that way. Amongst these are the Natural and Experimental Sciences and Modern Languages. In these subjects written papers without the addition of *viva voce* or of practical examination are not an adequate test. *Viva voce* examination is also of importance in testing the proper teaching of English and proficiency in Shorthand. On this point there was but little difference of opinion among the witnesses whom we have examined. Inspection might also be usefully employed for the purpose of satisfying the Board as to the sufficiency of the teaching staff, the sanitary condition of the school, and the reasonableness of the arrangements as to school hours.

While we recognise the importance of inspection, and consider that it should form an element in a system of Intermediate education, we do not recommend that the report of an inspector should be substituted for a public examination of students as the basis of the distribution of the school grant. It has to be borne in mind that what is required is "a standard by means of which the work of one school can be measured with that of others," rather than what has been described as an "audit of the efficiency of schools."¹ What has to be determined, is, not the claim of a school to participate in a public grant limited in amount only by the willingness of Parliament to vote money for the advancement of secondary education, but the share in which a definite endowment ought to be distributed among the secondary schools in Ireland, in proportion to the educational work done by each. Whatever be the test

¹ Royal Commission on Secondary Education (1895), Vol. V., p. 433. (See also Memorandum by Sir Joshua Fitch, Appendix, Part II, p. 820).

"Royal Commission on Secondary Education (1895), Vol. I., p. 244.

adopted—examination or inspection—the result of its application must be the differentiating of school from school, with the inevitable consequence that what is awarded to one is withheld from others. It necessarily follows that the character of the test, and its practical application, will be subjected to the minutest criticism by those whose pecuniary interests are effected. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the system adopted should be not only satisfactory in itself, but should also command the confidence of the public.

It has been strongly pressed upon us that these conditions are satisfied by the examination test at present in operation. There can be no doubt that in one important view the operation of that test is satisfactory. All witnesses agree in attributing to the system of public general examination the advantage of freedom from suspicion, and indeed from all possibility, of favouritism. The personality of the student and the identity of the school at which he has been educated are alike unknown to the examiner. The test to which the schools are subjected is, as much as possible, of a uniform character. The individuality of the person by whom the test is practically applied cannot be altogether excluded under any system, but it comes less prominently into play under a system of examination than under one of inspection, and its operation could be to a great extent excluded if the examination papers were revised and systematically graduated by an examining board, as has been suggested by several witnesses.

The advantages of the method of simultaneous written examinations where schools have to be differentiated in point of efficiency, to the satisfaction of the public, are fully recognised in the Report of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education in England:—"Nor, indeed, is it likely that so convenient and economical a system, which has special advantages of its own, will fall into disuse. For it is a real merit of the systems that, within certain limits, it secures 'an independent test and attestation of efficiency' applicable at the same time to a large number of different schools, and therefore available for purposes of comparison."¹ The Report proceeds to quote the following passage from a memorandum submitted by the Cambridge Syndicate of Local Lectures:—"The wide competition thus introduced, and the publicity and the identity of the standard serve to determine the position of each school relatively to others. Deficiencies, moreover, are brought to light which may escape notice when the schools are considered singly, and an additional stimulus is applied."²

On the other hand, objections from an educational point of view to the system of examination have been pointed out by witnesses examined before us, and are stated in the Report from which we have quoted. It is urged that this system has a tendency to hamper a good teacher in his choice of educational methods and instruments, to lead teachers to concentrate their attention on the pupils sent in for examination, to the comparative neglect of others, and to interrupt the regular school work by preparation for the periodical examinations.³

In considering the weight of these objections, and of others which have been urged against a system of examination, it must be borne in mind that no method could possibly be devised which would be absolutely free from objection, and that what is to be sought for is not an absolutely perfect system, but the best practical system, having regard to all the circumstances with which the Intermediate Education Board has to deal. Furthermore, we are satisfied that, while objections of the class to which we have referred can be urged with considerable force against the method of examination in use under the Rules of 1878, it is possible so to alter the character of the public general examination as greatly to diminish their weight. A general pass examination can, we believe, be so conducted as to test true education, and not to interfere with the methods adopted in well-taught schools. If it should have the effect of interfering with the methods of inferior schools, this is far from being a disadvantage. We further believe that the mode of assessing the school grant on the examination of individual students can be altered, with the effect of bringing the school as a whole more prominently into view as the unit upon which the calculation is based, rather than the passing of each individual student.

III.—THE PUBLIC GENERAL EXAMINATIONS.

The examinations prescribed by the Schedmled Rules are held between the first day of June and the first day of August in each year, as directed by the Rules, at a large number of convenient centres throughout Ireland.

Advantages
of public
general
examination.

¹ Royal Commission on Secondary Education (1895), Vol. I, p. 242.

² *Ibid.*, p. 242.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 241-3.

The present system unsatisfactory.

These annual examinations perform the double task of (a) differentiating between the students, for the purpose of the distribution of exhibitions and prizes, and (b) determining the amount of the results fees payable to the several schools. The marks of the students examined at the various centres throughout the whole of Ireland are compared, and exhibitions and prizes are awarded to the best answerers. For this purpose the examination may be described as a competitive honour examination. It is expressly directed by the Scheduled Rules that "such prizes and exhibitions shall be awarded to the students highest in order of merit in the general examination list for the whole country in each year, without reference to the order of merit in the examination list for any particular place of examination." Regarded as the foundation of the distribution of the school grant, the examination may be described as a pass examination.

Like most things contrived a double debt to pay, the general examination, as hitherto held, has discharged neither obligation satisfactorily. The tendency of a general pass examination, which has to serve also as a competitive honour examination, is to become too difficult and otherwise unsatisfactory for the ordinary pass student. In a competitive examination the relative merits of candidates for prizes may fairly be tested by their capacity to deal with exceptional and abstruse points, and with rules of rare application, with which the ordinary student cannot be expected to be acquainted. The Board has endeavoured, with the aid of the Assistant Commissioners, to counteract this tendency. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to do so effectively so long as the examination upon which the school grant is assessed remains of the competitive character which we have described. In a subsequent part of this Report we deal with the honour examination, and with the awarding of exhibitions and prizes. As regards the general pass examination, we think it should approximate as nearly as possible to the kind of examination of the individual students, which ought to be made by an inspector thoroughly testing, for the purposes of comparison, the educational work done in each school. The papers set at this general examination should, therefore, be of such a character as (a) to test true educational work, as distinct from the mere overloading of the memory, and (b) to be within the capacity of a well-taught pupil of average ability.

IV.—THE SCHOOL GRANT.

The present system of results does

Many of the objections that have been urged against the existing system are, in reality, directed, not against the general principle of distributing a grant on the basis of examination, but against what (to adopt Sir Joshua Fitch's words) is "a wrong method of computing the grant." At present the individual pupil who passes the examination is taken as the unit for the purpose of calculation. His pass represents a definite sum of money earned by him for the manager of his school. This sum varies in amount from a minimum of £3 18s., to a possible maximum of £39, according to the grade in which the pupil passes, the number and character of the subjects in which he passes, and also according as the pass in each subject is an ordinary one or a pass with honours. This mode of calculating the school grant is an essential part of the scheme prescribed by the Scheduled Rules. But it is not essential to a system of public examination; and we think that many of the objections to which we have referred may be removed by the substitution of a method of distribution in which the dominant factor shall be, not the answering of each individual pupil, but the general efficiency of the school, ascertained by the test of such an examination as we have indicated, supplemented by inspection.

Recommendation :
a capitation grant.

Accordingly, we recommend that there should be substituted for the payment on individual results, a capitation school grant, payable to the manager of each school upon the entire number of its pupils on the Intermediate roll, the amount of the grant to be estimated in the following manner.

The capitation rate for each school should be determined by the proportion borne by the number of students of the school who pass the public general examination to the total number of students on the "Intermediate School Roll" of the school. This roll, as we shall afterwards explain in detail, should include, with certain specified exceptions, all students within the prescribed limits of age for the respective grades, who are receiving an education of an Intermediate character in the school.

A certain proportion of passes should be determined upon, representing a standard of efficiency which might reasonably be prescribed as entitling a school to share in the school grant. A school passing only that proportion of its pupils should be entitled to a capitation grant on the entire number of the students on its school

¹ Memorandum by Sir Joshua Fitch, Appendix, Part II, p. 300.

roll; but only to a capitation grant calculated at a prescribed minimum rate. The rate should then be graduated in proportion to the percentage of passes until a defined maximum rate is reached. The capitation grant should be payable at this maximum rate, on the school passing a prescribed high percentage of its pupils. The grant thus regulated by the proportion of passes in the school may be termed the "normal school grant."^{The "normal school grant."}

The exact percentages to be prescribed is a matter that will require careful consideration. We recognise whatever figures may be determined on in the first instance will require revision by the Board from time to time, in the light of its experience of the practical working of the system. We have, therefore, contented ourselves with stating the general principles upon which we think that the school grant ought to be assessed.

Whatever be the proportion of passes that may be prescribed as entitling a school to participate in the "normal school grant," a school passing less than that proportion would be thereby excluded from all share in the funds at the disposal of the Board. A very trifling shortening in the proportion of passes would have this effect, unless some special provision were made for the purpose of dealing with such cases. Individual cases of hardship that might otherwise arise will be to some extent obviated by the arrangement which we afterwards suggest, to the effect that the amount of the school grant to be paid to a school in any year shall be determined, not by the percentage of its students passing at that one year's examination, but by the general result of its passes spread over a triennial period. But in addition to this, it may be further provided, that within certain limits, a school falling slightly short of the requirement for obtaining the capitation grant at the minimum rate, shall not therefore be altogether cut off from the benefit of the grant.

Furthermore, in order to encourage and reward teaching of a higher order than that which would be sufficient to secure a pass at the general examination, we think that the "normal school grant" ought to be increased by a bonus in the form of a percentage on the grant, in the case of schools of proved higher efficiency. The rate of percentage, might, for instance, be made to depend on the proportion between the marks gained at the public general examination by its pupils of all grades, as compared with the maximum marks obtainable.^{The grant to be subject to increase or diminution}

We also recommend, if the necessary powers were conferred on the Board, and if the practical experience of inspection proved satisfactory, that the result of inspection be adopted as a factor in estimating an increase in the "normal school grant" on the ground of efficiency. We consider, however, that any power to this effect granted to the Board should be strictly limited, so as to secure that the "normal school grant" should always be estimated on the basis of the public general examination.

We further suggest, that the "normal school grant" should be increased or diminished in accordance with another scale. A fair test of the efficiency of any particular school, for the purpose of Intermediate education, is afforded by the proportion of students who pass from the Preparatory to the Junior Grade, and from it to the Middle and Senior Grades. The evidence before us discloses the fact that, in a considerable number of schools, pupils in the lower grades who are, in no proper sense of the term, students pursuing a course of Intermediate education, are presented for examination and earn results fees for the school. We think that the definition of a school contained in the Scheduled Rules might be usefully amended, so as to make the definition more effectual in excluding schools whose principal function is affording primary education, and which, therefore, are not in the true sense of the term Intermediate schools. This question will become of greater importance when the school, instead of the individual pupil, becomes the unit for the purpose of distributing the school grant.

We fully recognise that only a certain proportion of students in any school can be expected to pass through all the grades, but we think that a distinct encouragement should be given to a school in which a fair number of its students are receiving the full benefit of an Intermediate education. Accordingly we suggest that the "normal school grant" payable to a school should be increased by a bonus of some defined percentage if the number of its passes in the Middle Grade shall bear a fair proportion to the number of its passes in the Junior Grade; and by an additional bonus of a suitable percentage if the number of its passes in the Senior Grade shall bear a fair proportion to its passes in the Junior Grade. On the other hand we suggest that the "normal school grant" should be reduced by a defined percentage, in the case of a school the number of whose passes in the Junior Grade shall not be fairly proportioned to the number of its

passes in the Preparatory Grade. The percentages in all these cases should be prescribed by rules made by the Board. The exact figures to be determined upon must be subject to revision in the light of experience, but the statistics which we have obtained will be of assistance to the Board, as indicating what may be reasonably expected in the case of a fairly conducted school of an Intermediate character.

The grant
to be
estimated
on a
triennial
period.

We are further of opinion that the yearly amount of the school grant should be estimated, not on the result of the examination held in one year only, but upon an average taken on a triennial period. This would be convenient to the managers of schools, who would be thus protected from the inconvenience otherwise likely to result from sudden changes in the amount of the yearly school grant, and it would have the further advantage of rendering the individual student a less prominent factor in the calculation of the amount carried to the credit of the school. To enable a school to have, before breaking up for the summer vacation, an exact knowledge of its financial position as affected by the grant from the Board, it would be convenient that the three years preceding each current year should be taken as the triennial period; so that, for instance, the grant for 1904 should be fixed by the examinations of 1901, 1902, and 1903. Suitable arrangements of a temporary character can easily be made to provide for the period of transition between the old system and the new, and for the case of schools coming into connection with the Board for the first time.

V.—DISTINCT COURSES.

Necessity
for distinct
courses.

We regard as one of the most important branches of our inquiry the question of assigning distinct courses of study so arranged as to afford to each student the opportunity of selecting a course specially suited to the career which he may intend to pursue. This is a subject which the Board has dealt with from time to time, so far as appeared to be possible under the system established in 1878.

We fully recognise the value of a liberal education to all who have the privilege of enjoying it, whatever their occupations or position in life may be, and we believe that an acquaintance with the languages and literatures of ancient Greece and Rome, combined with the study of mathematics, constitutes the soundest foundation for higher education. But the number of students whose circumstances permit them to pursue to the end what we may call the Grammar School course of instruction is comparatively small. By far the larger proportion of boys receiving education under the Intermediate system are destined for business in one form or another, and must necessarily leave school at an early age. It was represented to us on behalf of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, that "a great many boys intended for a mercantile career will never go on to the Senior Grade, because as a rule in offices we prefer getting them at certainly not over 15 or 16 years of age."² And similar evidence has been given as to the age at which boys usually enter on a commercial career in Belfast.³

There is also an increasing number of employments open to students for which a scientific training is essential, and we believe that if greater facilities were afforded for a sound secondary education including a training in science and art, the number of Irish students obtaining employments of this kind would be largely increased.

The evidence which we have taken has satisfied us that the provision made under the existing system for the classes of students to which we refer is inadequate, and that a substantial modification in the system established in 1878 is desirable.

Under the existing system the selection of a set of subjects specially suited to the requirements of particular classes of students is rendered possible, not by the prescribing of special courses, but by the option given to each student of selecting certain subjects out of the general curriculum of Intermediate studies prescribed by the rules. The Scheduled Rules thus prescribed the subjects of examination:—

- "The following shall be the divisions of the subjects of examination, viz.:—
- (1.) The ancient language, literature, and history of Greece;
- (2.) The ancient language, literature, and history of Rome;
- (3.) The language, literature, and history of Great Britain and Ireland;
- (4.) The language, literature, and history of France, Germany, and Italy, or any one of them, either separately or together, with the Celtic language and literature;
- (5.) Mathematics, including arithmetic and book-keeping;
- (6.) Natural sciences; and
- (7.) Such other subjects of secular education as the Board may from time to time prescribe."

² Oral Evidence, Mr. Jagie, q. 12025.

³ Ibid., Mr. James Pyper, q. 11280-6.

Under (7) the Board has from time to time prescribed the following subjects:—
Spanish, Drawing, Theory of Music, Domestic Economy, Shorthand.

Working under this system, the Board has endeavoured to encourage specialisation in the following ways:—

(1.) By limiting the number of subjects. In the Rules of the Board for 1882 it was laid down that the subjects in which students presented themselves for examination should be so selected that the total marks assigned to them in the programme should not exceed 7,500, the aggregate marks assigned to all the subjects varying according to the grades from 3,600 to 10,700. In the Rules for 1884, the total was reduced to 7,000. The totals were finally fixed—for the Preparatory Grade in 1897 at 5,400, and in 1898 at 6,000 in the Junior and Middle Grades, and 6,500 in the Senior Grade, the aggregate marks assigned to all the subjects varying from 3,100 in the Preparatory Grade to 12,600 in the Senior Grade.

(2.) By awarding medals and prizes for proficiency in certain subjects. This system was introduced in 1881. At present there are four subjects, or groups of subjects, in each of which medals are awarded.

(3.) By the adoption of a principle of marking, in reference to prizes and exhibitions, by which excellence in a special subject is placed at an advantage compared with a lower order of merit distributed over a wider range of subjects. The precise system of calculation has been varied from 1879 to the present time. Since 1893 a deduction is made, in the first instance, of 25 per cent. from the total number of marks assigned to all the subjects in which the student has presented himself for examination, and each mark gained by the student over 75 per cent. of his score counts as two.

(4.) By the institution of a separate Commercial course for the Middle and Senior Commercial Grades, which in 1893 was changed into a system of commercial certificates awarded in the Junior Grade as well as in the Middle and Senior Grades. The ordinary exhibitions and prizes are open to commercial students, and, in addition, special money prizes are provided for them. In 1898, 123 students passed with commercial certificates. Of these twelve obtained new exhibitions, twelve retained exhibitions previously awarded, and twenty-five obtained special commercial prizes.

Although these figures represent a substantial improvement, we believe that the objects at which the Board has thus aimed can be fully attained only by separating the Intermediate curriculum into different courses. It has been found practically impossible so to arrange a single programme, and so to assign marks to the different subjects, as to enable a student, or the authorities of his school, to select the particular set of subjects best suited to the student's needs, without sacrificing substantial pecuniary advantages which could be secured, for the students on the one hand, or for the school on the other, by the selection of some other subjects. The present system leads to the selection of those subjects to which, in a single programme, the highest marks must necessarily be assigned, inasmuch as they are, by general consent, the most important branches of the highest kind of secondary education. In a uniform programme Greek, Latin, and Mathematics must necessarily carry comparatively a large number of marks. But in a Commercial curriculum, their relative value, as compared with Modern Languages or with Physical Science, would be materially altered. The evidence given before us shows that students in considerable numbers have been drawn away from studies more suitable for them, and induced to adopt what we have called the Grammar School course. The managers of schools find it easier to earn results fees, and the students to win exhibitions, by selecting the subjects which are included in this course. No readjustment of subjects included in a single programme can remedy this evil. Accordingly, we propose to divide the Intermediate curriculum into at least two separate courses, each having a separate programme, viz.:—

(1.) The Grammar School course, specially adapted for students who intend to enter a University or compete for the higher branches of the Civil Service.

(2.) The Modern course, in which Natural and Experimental Sciences and Modern Languages will have special weight attached to them.

In connection with the Modern course arrangements could be made to suit the special requirements of students intended for a commercial career; and it might also be adapted to the requirements of girls, so as to form an alternative to the Grammar School course.

We should gladly have postponed the separation of courses to a later period in the Intermediate course than the Junior Grade. But the evidence before us as to the ages at which students usually enter on a commercial career, seems to render this practically impossible. We cannot do more in this Report than indicate the general character of these courses, and the principles on which they should be framed.

The Preparatory Grade.

For the Preparatory Grade a single programme should be prescribed, containing all the subjects which constitute the foundation of a sound secondary education. Specialisation may be encouraged to an increasing degree in the Junior, Middle, and Senior grades, but the essential conditions of secondary, as distinguished from primary education, or from one of a purely business or professional character, should never be lost sight of. We expect that the sub-division of courses will lead to the further development in Intermediate schools of what may be termed the "modern" side, and to the establishment, where the conditions are favourable, of schools, bearing to the Grammar Schools somewhat the same relation as, in Germany, *Realschulen* bear to the *Gymnasien*.

In arranging the programmes for the several courses, and in estimating the weight which should be attached to the several subjects, the Board will derive great assistance from the evidence taken in this inquiry, and from the suggested programmes for the several courses and grades, and a special course for girls, which have been submitted for our consideration by several witnesses.¹

VI.—EDUCATION OF GIRLS.

We have received valuable information from heads of colleges and schools for girls and from other witnesses who are specially interested in this branch of secondary education. The Board was directed by the Act of 1878 to make rules "for applying, as far as conveniently may be, the benefits of this Act to the education of girls." No direct reference to girls was made in the Scheduled Rules. The rules made by the Board in 1879 provided that the examination of girls should be held apart from that of boys, but on the same days, and that there should not be any competition between boys and girls for prizes and exhibitions, the number of these rewards allotted to girls being regulated by the number of girls who pass, on the principle followed in the case of boys.

The examination for Girls.

The examinations have throughout been the same for boys and girls, except that the conditions of passing as regards the particular subjects, have been somewhat different in the case of girls, and a few subjects have been prescribed for girls only.

Beneficial results.

The system thus established has been adopted by a large number of girls' schools, and the evidence before us leaves no doubt that its introduction has greatly raised the standard of female education in Ireland. It appears that in the year 1898, 2,368 girls presented themselves for examination, and that of the £49,455 2s. 7d. paid in results fees in the same year, £11,893 3s. 7d. was paid to managers of 161 girls' schools. Of the £18,481 17s. 10d. expended in exhibitions and prizes the amount won by girls was £4,610 3s. 2d.

Objections.

The evidence shows us that the benefits of the system are not shared to the full extent by schools in which girls are now receiving an Intermediate education. An objection is said to exist to the present system on the part of many parents of girls and heads of schools on the ground of over-pressure and danger of over-work, which they regard as the result of the too keen competition caused by the examinations. We consider that objections of this kind will be to a great extent removed by the changes which we suggest in the character of the public general examinations and by the suggested system of exhibitions and prizes. Another class of objection had reference to the Intermediate programme, which is regarded by some as ill-adapted to the requirements of girls.

On the other hand, it has been strongly pressed on us that the establishment of a different programme for girls would be a retrograde movement; that it was suggested in 1884, when leading authorities on the education of women protested with success; and that any lowering of the standard would place Irish girls in a disadvantageous position in relation to those educated in England. We think that the Grammar School course should be open to girls as well as to boys. The subdivisions of courses which we have recommended, and the institution of a modern course, may lead to a modification

¹ ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS (Appendix to First Report)—*Education Committee of Model Schools*, p. 261; Col. G. T. Phibson, p. 310; Mr. Joseph Brown, p. 46; Prof. Albert Geff, p. 68; Prof. D'Arcy, p. 103; Mr. Daniel Farrelly, p. 131; Mr. E. D. Lynch, p. 194; Rev. Dr. O'Dea, p. 336; Rev. M. Sheehan, p. 323.

APPENDIX TO FINAL REPORT, PART II.—Miss White, p. 44; Prof. John Joly and Prof. D. J. Cunningham, p. 55.

of the latter course, with special reference to the requirements of girls. A greater degree of liberty also will be enjoyed by the managers of girls' schools if the suggestions contained in Part IX. of this Report are carried into effect, under which the managers would be able, if they thought fit, to distribute rewards and prizes within the school, on a system selected by them and approved by the Board.

VII.—GRADES.

We do not suggest that any change should be made in the existing number of grades, or in the normal limits of age in the several grades.

The change which we contemplate in the character of the public general examination renders it unnecessary to discuss a suggestion as to the Preparatory Grade, in regard to which there was a substantial agreement. It was generally agreed that the Preparatory Grade, if retained, should be non-competitive. So far as the general examination is concerned, it will be non-competitive as regards all the grades; and we do not suggest that pupils in the Preparatory Grade should be admitted to compete at the special examination which we recommend should be held for exhibitions and prizes. A question has been raised whether that grade should be retained. The reasons which led to the establishment of the Preparatory Grade by the Board in 1892, and which have been urged upon us in favour of its retention, appear to be satisfactory.

If the Preparatory Grade were abolished, there would be a danger of teachers beginning too soon to prepare pupils for the examination prescribed in the Junior Grade, instead of devoting a due share of attention to more elementary instruction. Besides this, the immediate prospect of an examination such as we suggest will act as an incentive to diligence on the part of the younger students, while it will direct the attention of the teacher to the class of studies suitable for their age.

It has been suggested that the period covered by the Junior, Middle, and Senior Grades should be, as at present, four years, but that each student should be at liberty to take an extra year in any one of those grades. This may, under the existing rules, be done in the Junior Grade only. Thus it would be open to a student, if it was thought desirable, to go through a five years' course of education, while the Intermediate system includes four grades, with an examination in each. We regard this suggestion as a good one. The Intermediate course might thus be adapted to the requirements of the individual student. The grade to which two years' study should be devoted could be selected by the master, with special regard to the requirements of the individual pupil, who would, in most instances, derive benefit from the additional year's study, judiciously applied.

The number of grades.

The Preparatory Grade.

The limits of age.

VIII.—THE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL ROLL.

In Part IV. of this Report we suggest that the proposed capitation grant should be payable upon what we have there called the "Intermediate School Roll." We recommend that this roll should be ascertained, for the purposes of the school grant, in the following manner:—

The Intermediate School Roll; how to be ascertained.

(1.) The manager of each school to furnish, on or before the 15th of November in each year, a list of all pupils within the limits of age prescribed for the grade in which they are receiving instruction in any one of the prescribed courses, exclusive of pupils whose parents have before that date signified in writing an objection to their children being presented at the public general examination.

(2.) The normal limits of age for each grade to be as at present, the existing provision for over-age pupils being retained.

(3.) The period covered by the Junior, Middle and Senior Grades to be four years, as at present; but with liberty to take, in any one of those grades, the extra year now allowed in the Junior Grade only.

(4.) The list to divide the pupils into their various grades, distinguishing, in the case of each grade, pupils within the normal limits of age and over-age pupils; and also stating in which of the prescribed courses each pupil is to be presented for examination.

(5.) On the 1st of May following, the names of all pupils who have failed to make 100 attendances from the 15th of the preceding October, to be removed from the list.

(6.) The list so revised to constitute the "Intermediate School Roll."

IX.—THE HONOUR EXAMINATION, EXHIBITIONS AND PRIZES.

The Board, as we have already pointed out, was directed by the Act of 1878 to apply a portion of the funds under its control in providing exhibitions and prizes for students competing at examinations held by it; and under the Act of 1890 it was bound to expend a portion of the additional endowment provided by that Act in similar awards in accordance with a scheme to be settled by the Board with the approval of the Lord Lieutenant and the Treasury. The proportions in which these endowments were to be divided between the managers of the schools and the successful students was not defined. In 1898, £49,453 2s. 7d. was expended in results fees, and £18,481 17s. 10d. in exhibitions and prizes. The sums so expended in each year from the passing of the Act of 1878, are set forth in a table printed in the Appendix.

The general competition. These exhibitions and prizes are awarded as the result of the public general examination held in each year. They naturally give rise to keen competition between the students, and as the examination is held for the whole of Ireland, the competition becomes one between school and school.

Objections. Strong objections have been urged against this system and it also has its advocates. We have already pointed out that a competitive examination for valuable prizes and coveted distinctions necessarily assumes a character different from that of the test which is best adapted for the purpose of determining the school grant. The paper as a whole, must necessarily be beyond the powers of the average pass student. The Board has been careful to insist on the inclusion in each paper of what may be called "pass" questions and exercises. But the proportion which this part of each paper bears to the whole cannot be definitely fixed, nor is it always possible for the ordinary student to recognise it at a glance. The percentage of marks required for a pass must, under these circumstances, be a low one. We regard it as much more satisfactory that a pass should represent a comparatively high percentage on a suitable paper, than a lower percentage on one which, to an undetermined extent, must be beyond the powers of the ordinary student.

A special examination for Honours, Exhibitions and Prizes. We therefore recommend that the annual general examination should no longer serve for competitive as well as for pass purposes, and that a special examination for those students who aim at higher distinction than a mere pass should be held in each year immediately after the general pass examination. At present one fortnight is devoted to the annual examination. We anticipate that one half of this time will amply suffice for the purposes of the pass examination. The remainder of the fortnight might be devoted to an examination at which prizes and exhibitions might be given to the most successful students, and honours, on a non-competitive system, might be awarded to students who attained a certain degree of excellence.

Although this change will remove several of the objections which have been urged against the present system, it leaves others untouched. A general pass examination may be so conducted as not to interfere with the individuality of schools, or to hamper teachers in the selection of the methods and programmes which they prefer, provided always that they lead to the attainment of certain educational results. But competitive examinations conducted throughout the country on a uniform system, at which valuable prizes are awarded in large numbers have, it is urged, a necessary tendency to establish a uniform standard, external to the school, towards which the work of the teachers will be constantly directed.

"The prize grant." A practical solution of the question would be to give to the Manager of each school the option of receiving, over and above the amount of the capitation grant, a proportionate sum of money (which may be described as "the prize grant"), to be applied within the school as rewards to its pupils, under a scheme to be approved by the Board, and subject to such conditions as the Board may impose. Managers of schools who accept this option would secure greater freedom in the internal management of their schools, provided always that their methods, and the system under which rewards were distributed among their pupils, were such as to meet with the approval of the Board.

We think that a certain number of the exhibitions should be of the nature of scholarships, affording free, or partially free education at schools either within the limits of the Intermediate system or outside it.

At present candidates for exhibitions select a certain number of subjects out of the general programme of the Intermediate course. We suggest that the exhibitions and prizes awarded to students at the special examination should be apportioned between

¹ Appendix, Part II., p. 275.

the various courses in accordance with the number of passes in each course, and that the competition should be limited to students examined in the same course at the general examination. We further recommend that a condition of the retention of an exhibition awarded upon the result of the special examination should be that the holder pass the general examination in each year in one of the courses, and obtain not less than a prescribed number of marks.

X.—OVER-PRESSURE.

We believe that the danger of educational over-pressure at an early age is, at the present day, a very real one, and that the efforts of the framers of any system of Intermediate education should be directed towards minimising it.

We have had interesting and important evidence on this subject. Dr. Charles E. FitzGerald laid before us letters which he had received from twelve eminent medical men in Ireland in support of the proposition that the working of the Intermediate Act had been attended with injurious effects as regards the physical condition of students,¹ and the subject has been adverted to in the evidence of several other witnesses. The particular matter towards which Dr. FitzGerald, as an oculist, directed his attention was the injurious effect of over-study on eye-sight, but the evidence of the other medical men extended further. We do not believe that this danger can be altogether avoided, under any system, in an age when competition in the race of life is so keen, and when success depends so largely on the result of competitive examinations. According to Dr. FitzGerald, the phenomena which he attributes to the working of the Intermediate Act are observable in America and in Germany. It is, therefore, impossible accurately to apportion the responsibility for these disastrous results between the tendencies of the age and the special features of the educational system in operation in any particular country, nor are we in a position to compare the number of students whose constitutions are injured by over-work with the number of those who are ruined by idleness and its consequences.

Whatever opinion may be entertained on these debatable points we have no doubt that the changes suggested by us in the existing system tend in the direction of minimising the danger of over-pressure. The particular features of the existing system which have been held mainly responsible for over-pressure are the competitive examinations, open to the whole of Ireland, and the system of paying results fees calculated on the answering of individual pupils. If our suggestions are carried into effect, it will in future be more in the interests of the manager to bring up the general level of the school to a certain standard, than to secure passes with honours by unduly pressing forward the more promising pupils. We do not think that the cause of higher education will suffer by this change. The credit which the school derives from the successes of the more promising pupils at the universities and in after life will still operate as an inducement to the master to develop their capacities, as it did before the passing of the Intermediate Education Act, while the system of exhibitions and prizes will stimulate the exertions of the more brilliant students. It is also to be observed that parents who object to their children being subjected to a general competitive examination can, under the proposed system, select schools where the option of distributing rewards within the school has been adopted by the managers.

XI.—SPECIAL AID TO CERTAIN SCHOOLS.

It has been strongly urged that the funds at the disposal of the Board might be usefully applied in the support and development of young and struggling schools in districts where they are urgently needed. It does not seem possible to frame a general scheme universally applicable to such cases; and to leave the distribution of the grants in aid to the discretion of the Board would not be desirable. We do not therefore recommend that the legislature should be asked for powers to enable the Board to give special grants in aid of schools so circumstanced. But it has been suggested to us that in some cases local aid towards the starting of a secondary school might be forthcoming, in the form of a guarantee for the repayment of money advanced by the Board. The Board has no power to make such an advance under the present Act. It is a power that should be cautiously exercised, but we think that it might prove useful in certain cases, and we recommend that the Board should be empowered to advance money to managers of schools, upon approved security, to enable them to purchase equipment and appliances for the teaching of practical science, and for similar purposes to be approved by the Board.

¹ Oral Evidence, Dr. C. E. FitzGerald, pp. 6362-6517.

Effective
suggested
reforms.

XII.—TEACHING IN SCIENCE AND ART.

The Board
and the
Department
of Science
and Art.

We have already referred to the importance of *vis et vice* examination as a test of practical instruction in certain branches, particularly in the Natural and Experimental Sciences. Many schools are without the equipment and appliances needful for the practical teaching of these sciences. It has been suggested that the State grant in aid of instruction in Science and Art might be made more largely available in Ireland if the Board were empowered to occupy in regard to the Department the position of a local authority. We should be glad if this suggestion could be carried into effect. In the meantime certain suggestions have been made which, if adopted, would have the effect of encouraging efficient teaching in these branches of learning. One of these has been referred to in Part XL of this Report.

We also recommend that the Board should have power to stipulate with managers of schools presenting pupils for examination in the Natural and Experimental Sciences (when it considers it just and expedient so to do) that a certain portion of the school grant earned by them be applied in the provision of proper equipment and appliances for the practical teaching of these sciences.

We further recommend that the Board should have power to accept, for the purpose of estimating the amount of the school grant for schools for girls, the examinations of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, the Associated Board of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music (London), or kindred bodies.

XIII.—FURTHER LEGISLATION.

Further
legislation
necessary.

We have been asked by your Excellency to report whether further legislation is necessary for carrying into effect the reforms and alterations in the present system which may be found desirable. The answer to this question is already apparent from our observations on the Acts of 1878 and 1890. Accordingly we beg to report that further legislation is necessary in order to enable the Board to carry into effect, in their entirety, the recommendations contained in this Report.

Whilst making these recommendations we are fully alive to the fact that practical difficulties may arise in at once carrying them into effect. We assume that the Board will not find it desirable to make all the suggested changes at once, and in connection with all the different grades; and if the necessary powers are granted by legislation, we desire that there should be reserved to the Board the discretion of using these powers tentatively in the first instance.

XIV.—REFERENCE TO EVIDENCE OF OTHER POINTS.

Other
matters and
the subject
of specific
recommendation.

Although in our recommendations we have confined ourselves to suggested reforms and alterations of the system established in 1878, various matters of interest and importance have been brought before us in the course of our inquiries, which can be dealt with under the existing system. Most of these have already engaged the attention of the Board. We can do no more in this Report than refer to the more important of these subjects, the evidence bearing on each of which can be found by reference to the Indexes contained in the Appendix. The question of the separation of honour papers from pass papers will become unimportant if the changes which we suggest in the public general examination are carried into effect. But the value of the opinions which have been expressed by high authorities as to the best mode of testing a student's knowledge of the classical languages by means of written papers, and as to the advantage of widening the range of reading in those languages, will lose none of their importance. The value of the study of Celtic, or Irish, and the character of the literature extant in that language; the study of Botany, and the possibility of conducting a practical examination in that subject at the several centres; the best mode of examining in Music, in Shorthand, and in Drawing, have been dealt with by witnesses of the highest authority.

Other suggestions of a practical character have been offered which are deserving of careful consideration. Several witnesses have advocated the introduction of a more permanent element into the body of examiners, and the employment of some of the number in the work of revision and graduation of the examination papers. It has been suggested that the Board might with advantage seek the advice of a consultative committee, representative of those who are engaged in the practical work of education. The degree of publicity which ought to be given to the individual results of the public examination of students has also been discussed, and allegations have been made as to

the existence of what has been termed "tooting" for pupils likely to earn substantial sums for managers of schools in the form of results fees. The proportion borne by the money expended in exhibitions and prizes to the entire endowment of the Board has also been the subject of comment.

In regard to these matters, and to others of lesser importance, we beg to report that a body of evidence has been laid before us which cannot fail to prove of great value in the future. But as the various matters to which this evidence is addressed can be dealt with by the Board, by rules, consistently with the existing system, we do not think it necessary to make them the subject of specific recommendations in our Report.

The important question of registration of teachers in Intermediate schools in Ireland, was brought under our notice. We did not enter on an inquiry into this matter, inasmuch as it was outside the scope of the Commission under which we were appointed.

It was represented to us on behalf of several medical bodies that the facts of the examinations under the Intermediate Board being held only once a year, and being open only to candidates of certain definite ages, render them unsuitable as a substitute for the preliminary examinations required for the purposes of the medical and other professions, and it was suggested that special examinations should be held for this purpose. We think that a special relaxation of the limits of age might be made in the case of these classes of students. But we do not think that the holding of such special examinations as are suggested would be a legitimate application of the funds at the disposal of the Board.

XV.—GENERAL SUMMARY.

The following is a summary of our principal recommendations:—

Summary
of Recom-
mendations

- That a public general examination of students should be retained as the basis of the calculation of the school grant, but that this examination should not be competitive.
- That the papers set at this examination should be of such a character as (a) to test true educational work, as distinct from the mere overloading of the memory, and (b) to be within the capacity of a well-taught pupil of average ability.
- That the programme of the Board should prescribe at least two distinct courses—(1) the Grammar School course, and (2) the Modern course, in either of which a student may present himself for examination.
- That the school grant should be a capitation grant paid on the "Intermediate School Roll" ascertained in the manner which we have already explained.
- That in order to be entitled to receive a grant at the minimum rate, a school should be required to pass a fair proportion of the total number of pupils on the "Intermediate School Roll," as defined above.
- That a school passing the prescribed percentage of the total number of its pupils on the roll as defined above should receive a grant at a certain rate; and that the percentage should be graduated according to the proportion of passes until a defined maximum rate is reached. The capitation grant payable to a school, thus ascertained, may be called the "normal school grant."
- That in order to encourage schools of more than average efficiency, the "normal school grant" payable to a school should be increased by the addition of bonuses, at rates to be prescribed by the Board, as (for instance):—
 - By the addition of a bonus, or bonuses, if the average marks gained by its pupils, in all grades, amount to a certain percentage of the maximum number of marks attainable at the public general examination.
 - By an additional bonus, if the number of its passes in the Middle Grade be not less than a prescribed percentage of the number of its passes in the Junior Grade.
 - By an additional bonus, if the number of its passes in the Senior Grade be not less than a prescribed percentage of the number of its passes in the Junior Grade.
 - By an additional bonus as the result of inspection, subject to the limitations stated in the body of our Report.
- That the "normal school grant" should be reduced by a prescribed percentage in the case of a school the number of whose passes in the Junior Grade does not bear a fair proportion to the number of its passes in the Preparatory Grade.

Secretary
of Board
minutes,

9. That, to guard against the inconvenience otherwise likely to result from sudden changes in the amount of the yearly school grant, the grant should be given each year, not upon the results of the examination in one year only, but upon an average taken on a triennial period.
10. That, to enable a school to have, before breaking up for the summer vacation, an exact knowledge of its financial position as affected by the grant from the Board, the three years preceding each current year should be taken as the triennial period—so that, for instance, the grant for 1904 should be fixed by the results of the examination of 1901, 1902, and 1903—a special provision being made for the transitional period intervening between the old and the new systems.
11. That, in subjects which cannot be adequately tested by written examination, the Board should adopt means to satisfy itself of the efficiency of the teaching, by the visit of an inspector, or by *rôle réel* examination in the school or at a common centre.
12. That the Board should satisfy itself as to the sufficiency of the teaching staff; the sanitary condition of the school; and the reasonableness of the arrangements as to school hours.
13. That the Board should also satisfy itself that, in schools where Natural and Experimental Sciences are taught, proper equipment and appliances have been provided and used for teaching these sciences practically.
14. That submission to the requirements of the Board in the matters mentioned in 11, 12, and 13 should be a condition precedent to a school obtaining any grant from the Board.
15. That an honour examination should be held in each year immediately after the general pass examination, and that the Board should continue to allocate in each year a portion of the funds under its control for exhibitions and prizes, subject as regards the mode of distribution, to any modification which may take place under the suggestion contained in Part IX. of this Report.
16. That the Board should be authorized to stipulate with managers presenting pupils for examination in the Natural and Experimental Sciences, that a certain proportion of the school grant should be applied in the provision of proper equipment and appliances for the practical teaching of these sciences.
17. That the Board should be empowered to advance money to managers of schools upon approved security, to enable them to provide proper equipment and appliances for the teaching of practical Science, and for similar purposes to be approved by the Board.

We desire, in conclusion, to acknowledge the zeal and efficiency with which our Secretary, Mr. J. D. Daly, has discharged his duties, and the valuable assistance which we have received from him throughout the whole of our inquiry.

All which we humbly submit for your Excellency's consideration.

Dated this Eleventh day of August, 1899.

C. PALLETT.
D. H. MADDEN.
GEO. SALMON.
O'CONOR DON.
W. TODD MARTIN.
DAVID O. BARKLEY.
WILLIAM J. WALSH,
Archbishop of Dublin.

JAMES DERMOT DALY,
Secretary.